

TOC H JOURNAL

Vol. XXXI

DECEMBER, 1953

No. 12

A CHRISTMAS GREETING
TO ALL READERS,
both at home and overseas,
to those in ships of the Royal Navy
and the Merchant Navy,
in Army camps
and on R.A.F. stations;
To the many members
throughout the British Commonwealth
and beyond its borders,
in Government Service
or civil occupations;
the Editorial Staff send
warmest Christmas Greetings.
We also thank
all who have sent articles,
or letters, complimentary or critical,
and those who toyed with the idea
but never quite got down to writing.
A special 'thank you' is due
to our Printers and Engravers,
who have done much fine work,
and to you all we wish
A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS.

The World Chain of Light

THE TOC H FAMILY of Christian faith and quiet service, gladly and freely given, gathers each year in some 1,500 Branches in mid-December for the World Chain of Light. This Godly custom had its origin within the genius of Toc H Australia. It has proved precious to a high degree; indeed it may be said that all true members wherever they may be on this occasion, renew their spirits in this Chain of Light. The deepening sense of purpose in the Movement, the recognition of our common aim and of God's will and guidance is thus renewed through the scattered family. We beg you not to miss the Chain of Light.

Launching the Light

This year, the World Chain of Light starts at Bulawayo in Southern Rhodesia. Here Sir Robert Tredgold, a true foundation member of Toc H, who was indeed a son of the Old House, with his dear wife beside him, will be launching the Light which travels round the World. This emblematic circuit of all Branches, both small and great, exceedingly dispersed, pursues its destined course from 9 p.m. upon Friday, December 11, until 9 p.m. on Saturday, December 12.

Deeper harmony

The drama and romance of this fine custom is difficult to probe in large cities; but in the lonely Branches overseas, in ships at sea, and with the far-flung members of Toc H in far up-country places, the loyalty to Toc H is resolute. Men, who themselves are quiet and reserved at normal times, are not neglectful of the Chain of Light. The names of leaders who have passed to rest flow back into our thankful recollection. The deeper harmony which binds us all becomes prevailing; and the one true Master is wellnigh manifest within our midst.

Do not neglect this night, I beg of you, for your own sake, and for your Brethren's sake. Toc H has much to do in 1954, for which it must be eagerly prepared. We have deep cause for gratitude and quiet confidence and forward hope. So—

Sursum Corda.

TUBBY.

We believe that the great task of conserving and replenishing the forests of the world, and of reclaiming the deserts and waste places by tree planting, requires the concerted action of every country . . . In times past it has been said that it was the duty of a man to be prepared to die for his country; today it is the duty of every thinking being to live, and to serve not only his own day and generation, but also the generations unborn, by helping to restore and maintain the green glory of the forests of the earth.—R. ST. BARBE BAKER

Recovery of the Sahara

THE LIBYAN DESERT, now marching towards the sea, was once part of the granary of the Roman Empire, while the centre of the Sahara nourished a busy trading civilisation until the last days of Arab power. Even as late as the eighteenth century, the area north of Tahoua was fertile enough to produce agricultural crops, and its population lived in permanent villages that are now sunk in ruins in the sand.

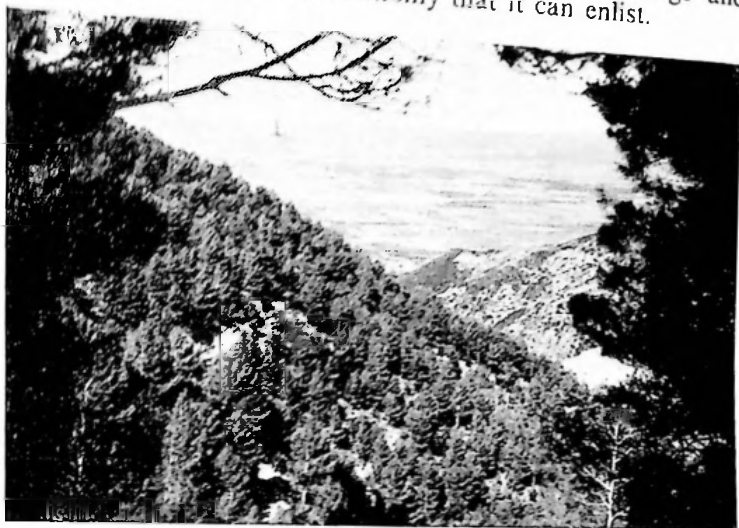
The expansion of the slave trade and the 'opening up' of Africa, with the resulting destruction of native economies and cultures, hastened the parching of the earth that the simpler Arabs had thoughtlessly exploited for centuries. The speed of dessication was, of course, increased by the further invasion of Western industrial power and economic attitudes—a speed so incredible that in 1951 the Sahara was enlarged by over 60,000 square miles, an increase representing a penetration into food-bearing land of thirty miles along a front of 2,000 miles.

In human terms

Try to imagine this advancing aridity in more human terms than the bare figures indicate. In one area to the north of the Gold Coast, the people have found themselves trapped in a wedge of vanishing forest. In other areas, flourishing farms have disappeared within living memory, and last year I sadly trudged through the sand in places which had been my forest haunts thirty years ago.

Thus it is that the increasing Sahara is already so large that, if we could set the whole of the United States in its centre, there would still be a vast—and widening—belt of sand around it. It is the most depressing, the most terrifying, picture of spreading erosion in the world today: for the magnitude of the task of containing and recovering the Sahara

is indicated by the gigantic efforts that are now being made to reclaim the lesser deserts of India, China and Soviet Russia. Therefore, it would be foolish to think that a relatively small society of tree lovers like The Men of the Trees is trying to reclaim the Sahara. That is not a project for a society, nor even for a nation, but for concerted and harmonious international action, aided by all the scientific knowledge and understanding of natural economy that it can enlist.



The Promise: Reforestation by the banquette system in Algeria.

At the same time I have never believed that we should sit still and wait for governments to act. There is much that we can do immediately in this great work of recovery, and we should spare no effort to do it. The special responsibilities of The Men of the Trees, and of kindred organisations and spirits, are firstly to enlarge, by every means in our power, a public opinion which will understand and increasingly demand a proper regard for natural resources and human welfare.

Ideally, efforts to contain the Sahara and reclaim it should be made at the same time, but in the present circumstances the immediate problem is to halt its encroachment on productive lands. Is it practicable, specially where the rainfall has fallen below the minimum required for tree growth?

I believe that it is, and the progress made by the French in the reafforestation of devastated areas in north and west Africa proves my belief. Their work in the hills is done by the *banquette* method, a system of terracing which has the great advantage of accommodating fruit trees (the figs are magnificent) on the gentler slopes and timber trees higher up. Monoculture is further avoided by encouraging natural mixtures of species, such as cedars and evergreen oaks, which



The Challenge: A small part of the encroaching desert

established themselves so long ago that they occur together in the fossilised remains of once extensive forests. *Casuarina* and other trees requiring very little water are, of course, also grown.

Forest expansion

Here, then, is one answer to the problem of containing the Sahara by planting its hills and fringes. The other lies in utilising the oases to establish trees, supported by nurseries for seedlings grown in pots, of soil-improving and water-conserving species, such as the rain tree of Jamaica and the many varieties of Australian acacias. Before long trees would surround these regenerated oases and new microclimates would be developed, which would aid the natural regeneration and expansion of the forests.

It follows that the containment of the Sahara would lead to the green penetration of the desert itself. It is perhaps too optimistic to hope that the outwards growths from the oases would eventually meet and cover the intermediate zones, but it is reasonable to suppose that the process could be hastened by tapping the subterranean waters for the benefit of the trees. That such waters do exist there can be no doubt, for there is evidence that these areas between oases were once occupied by high forests which maintained and used natural surface water supplies. Moreover, some waters are still so near the surface that here and there in the heart of the Sahara a lone tree manages to flourish.

It is obvious, I think, that this article does not attempt to provide a 'blueprint' for the reclamation of the Sahara, but I have tried to hint at its outlines. Many readers will be able to enlarge these outlines by following up the clues for themselves; and all will, I am sure, see how the objectives of *The Men of the Trees* fit into the picture.

Our concern

We are sometimes asked why we concern ourselves with the Sahara when there is so much to do nearer home. How would we benefit if the entire Sahara were turned into a Garden of Eden, since its productivity would mainly benefit its own peoples and those surrounding it?

The simple answer is that as men and women the improvement and protection of human living is our concern, while as *Men of the Trees* we are committed 'to encourage all to plant, protect and love trees everywhere'. The Sahara is also our concern because poverty, ignorance, hunger, land deprivation and blunted moral values are among the major causes of tension and strife today. We shall all live better as the world lives better; for apparently distant things are sometimes nearer than we suspect, as Rabindranath Tagore suggested in a beautifully symbolic line: 'The monsoon clouds generated on the banks of the Nile wash the shores of the Ganges'. Indeed, we shall build the New Earth only when we realise that the earth must be healed and transformed everywhere.

R.St.B.B.

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AUTY.—In October, the Rev. GEORGE S. AUTY, aged 65, a member of Witney Branch. Elected 1.12.'43.

BROOKE-POPHAM.—On October 20, Air Chief Marshal Sir ROBERT BROOKE-POPHAM, G.C.V.O., K.C.B., aged 75, a Vice-President of Toc H since 1932.

DAVEY.—On October 6, ERNEST DAVEY, aged 68, a member of St. Thomas (Exeter) Branch. Elected 1.4.'51.

DAVIES.—On October 6, DAVID FRANK DAVIES, aged 78, a founder member of Mold Branch. Elected 26.5.'53.

EASTON.—On October 21, WILLIAM GEORGE EASTON, aged 60, a member of Erith Branch. Elected 15.3.'33.

HINGE.—On October 6, STEPHEN W. HINGE, a member of Westfield Branch. Elected 12.5.'36.

MACLEAN.—On October 13, Lieut.-Colonel Sir EWEN JOHN MACLEAN, aged 88, a member of South Wales Area General Branch. Elected 13.1.'28.

PEET.—On October 11, GILBERT EDWARD PEET, aged 81, a member of Winscombe Branch. Elected 8.6.'40.

SAYCE.—On October 7, GEORGE ETHELBERT SAYCE, aged 77, a member of Builth Wells Branch. Elected 5.11.'37.

SEARLE.—On October 7, GEORGE SEARLE, aged 78, a member of Basingstoke Branch. Elected 19.4.'37.

TWELVE NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS

1. There shall be Six new Probationers in the Branch.
2. There shall be One new Group in the District.
3. There shall be Guests at the Branch Meetings.
4. The Branch shall always be represented at the meeting of the District Team.
5. The Branch shall undertake a New Job.
6. The Branch Meeting shall begin and end on Time.
7. The Branch shall be known for its Liveliness.
8. A Toc H Book shall be read.
9. The Four Gospels shall be read.
10. The Branch shall visit other Branches.
11. The Family Purse shall be Filled.
12. This is left to You.

EXPECTANT.

Multum in Parvo

✽ THE WORLD CHAIN OF LIGHT, the Birthdays of the Old House and of Tubby: At 9 p.m. on Friday, December 11, from Bulawayo to Britain and on. At 9 p.m. on Saturday, December 12, from New Zealand back to Bulawayo.

✽ *"In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea."*

✽ CYRIL CATTELL, recently Pilot of Christchurch Branch in Hampshire, is to become Area Secretary in Kent and Sussex.

✽ *"Pray remember that it is a Christmas custom from time immemorial to send and receive presents and congratulations from one friend to another."*

✽ Before the end of Coronation Year and in thanksgiving, an extra Christmas gift can help to SAVE THE ABBEY. Send to The Dean, Westminster Abbey, S.W.1.

✽ *"I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year."*

✽ SUNDAY, JANUARY 10: An appointment with our friends round the radio at 8.25 p.m. An opportunity to tell many people that Toc H has a great task ahead. An occasion to make real the goodwill of many potential Toc H Builders.

✽ *"It is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child himself."*

✽ WHIT MONDAY, JUNE 7: A note for diaries—Toc H Fête at Chatsworth Park, Derbyshire.

✽ *"Not in the news . . . No one knew it was happening . . . Herod . . . The High Priest . . . The inn-*

keeper . . . Some shepherds had an inkling . . . The most alert and intrusive of reporters could never have hit upon that stable as the scene of a world-shaking event . . . The things of first-rate importance are spiritual events which are known only by their results . . . Yet there is the precious fact; it did happen . . . The dayspring from on high visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness . . ."

Christmas Card Corner

A fable for To-day

AS THE CLOCK in the church tower struck midnight the lights in the shop window went out. It had been a busy day, with the shop crowded with harassed parents and excited children. Now all was quiet and peaceful.

One corner of the shop had been given over to the sale of Christmas Cards. The cheaper ones lay huddled in open trays, the more expensive rested neatly in cardboard boxes. Presently there was the sound of movement, and one of the box lids was pushed up.

'The lights are out', said a Three-and-Sixpenny Card. 'Thank goodness, we can have a bit of peace now'.

The remark was addressed to a Half-Crown neighbour who had rather disdainfully watched the afternoon's proceedings and had been relieved when no one had bought her, for she thought little of the inhabitants of the market town.

'Yes', she agreed, 'I shall be thankful for some quiet. When I left the makers I was warned that it would be a terribly noisy time; but I never imagined it would be as bad as this.'

'I know', said Three-and Six, 'it's quite intolerable. What makes it worse is—well—to put it bluntly, some of the Cards one is expected to associate with.' She bent closer to her companion. 'My dear, you'd hardly believe it, but I've been

told, and on excellent authority, that there are at least fifty Cards that were here last year! Of course, one can't help feeling sorry for them. It must be dreadful not being wanted.'

'Personally I'm glad that I'm still here, for I didn't at all like the look of the people who were in the shop this afternoon. They didn't strike me as being the kind that would really appreciate our standards.'

'I agree with you. This isn't at all the kind of place I would have chosen. I'm very far from wishing to sound snobbish, but one must face facts, and you and I are out of the ordinary.'

'Aren't they frightful?' whispered a Penny one. 'I suppose they think they own the place, because they're more expensive.'

'They give themselves such airs', said another Penny Card, 'and we're much more useful. How many people to-day can afford to spend all that money? It's a very good thing that we've come back again.'

'I shall laugh', said another, 'if they're never bought after all. I say, I've never thought of this before, but isn't it funny? What a "sell" it'll be for them!'

'What's the joke?', asked a Threepenny, and laughed when they told him. 'Well, we haven't anything to worry about. You and I are sure to be bought.'

'Don't you think', said a Sixpenny, 'that people's taste has improved? Not that I know anything personally about the past; but I've been told that in the old days things were different. I mean, we're better looking than our parents were.'

'I've heard the same', commented a Fourpenny. 'I'm new, too, but I really do think we're a very presentable lot. What's more, we give people a great deal of pleasure. I wonder where we'll go. I'd like to go abroad, but it's getting a bit late for that, I'm afraid.'

'I don't mind where I go', said a Shilling, 'so long as it's quiet and warm, and there aren't crowds of children tearing me to pieces. I like to be looked after properly, especially if I go to one of the houses where I'll be on duty until Twelfth Night.'

'You're making a great deal of noise', said Three-and-Six. 'How do you expect respectable people to get any sleep with all this chattering going on?'

'Oh, don't be so pompous', replied the Sixpenny. 'You're only putting on airs because you're frightened you'll be here next year. Why shouldn't we talk if we want to? We were having a very interesting conversation. I think you're right about being better looking. What's more, we're more refined than our ancestors.'

'How do you mean "more refined"?' asked the Fourpenny.

'Well', said the Sixpenny, 'what I mean is that in addition to being better looking we speak better. There aren't so many of us who recite dreadful little rhymes that would make any sensitive person physically sick. I think what we say is just as important as how we look.'

'Oh, I don't agree about that', said the Shilling. 'I don't believe that people bother much about what we say. It's our appearance that counts.'

'It all depends on who buys us', said a Threepenny. 'I mean, if it's someone who's religious, then they'll bother about the words.'

'That supports what I was saying', put in the Shilling. 'Fewer and fewer people to-day believe in a Christian Christmas, so they don't bother so much about the words we use.'

'I think that's a pity', said a Penny one. 'What's more, I believe it's very rude. If I understand it aright, Christmas is a Birthday, and it seems to me pretty shabby to ignore that altogether.'

'I suppose you're right', said the Shilling. 'but what else can you expect? If you don't believe in a Birthday, well, you won't bother about a Birthday Card, will you?'

'Well, I hope things will change', answered the Penny. 'If they did, I believe people would be a lot happier and a lot more peaceful. The last thing I want to do is to sound pious; but I'm a Religious Card and I still believe in "Glory to God in the Highest".'

'I know', said the Shilling, but what about your peace among men?'

'That's as simple as it's difficult,' replied the Penny. 'It's peace on earth among men of good will.'

'Well, I hope you'll prove right', said a Sixpenny. 'I'm for bed. It's been a long day. Good night, everybody.'

'Good night', said the others.

The box lids were lowered. The penny tray was still. All was quiet in the Christmas Card corner of a shop in a country town.

J.D.

Tubby on January 10

ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 10, 1954, Tubby will go from Tower Hill to the B.B.C., to introduce Toc H to his biggest audience, in the Week's Good Cause appeal at 8.25 p.m.

Tubby will have five minutes to sketch for his unseen listeners a word-picture of Toc H and seek support in the building of it. He needs our sustaining prayers in his responsible task as well as our efforts to get the broadcast known. Unless they read it in the *Radio Times* the day before, the great listening public will not know Tubby is speaking until they hear him announced and many old friends may be disappointed. Here are some suggestions to act upon:—

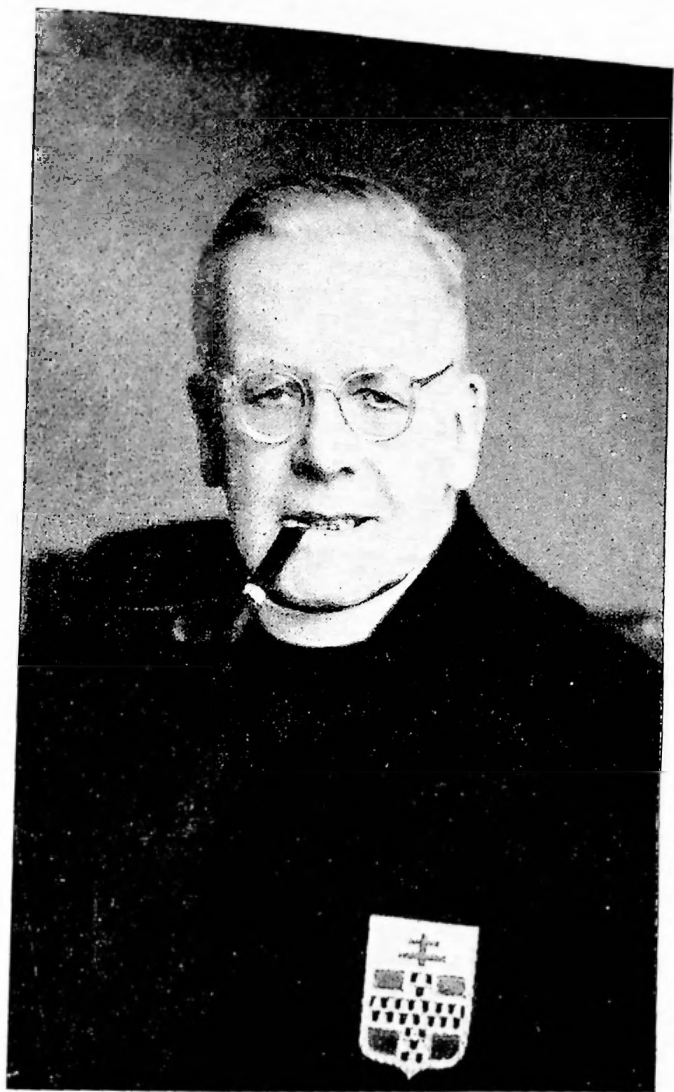
- ★ Arrange a small party in the Branch, at home, or in a friend's house, to listen to Tubby.
- ★ Send out Tubby's REMINDER POSTCARD three days before the appeal.
- ★ Attach GUMMED LABELS (size 3" × 1"), announcing the Broadcast, to your private and business correspondence (remembering the possibilities of the Christmas mails).
- ★ Hand the DONATION FORMS from this issue of the JOURNAL to the two friends most likely to use them. (If all these forms are used, we shall have 36,000 responses, apart from the usual listeners).
- ★ Secure NOTICES and PUBLICITY in the Press. Special 'Handouts' are ready for the asking, as well as specimen 'Copy' for ADVERTISEMENTS where Branches can arrange to insert these and meet the cost.

We have a B.B.C. appeal only once in three years. It is a privilege and opportunity which we dare not waste. It can be used not only to bring in an immediate response in donations, but as a means of making many new friends for Toc H. In an all-out effort, Branches might use the appeal to initiate a 'Builders' Week' to enrol new Builders.

Tubby will speak knowing that he has the Family solidly behind him.

K.A.R.

- ★ Note: REMINDER POSTCARDS, GUMMED LABELS, extra DONATION FORMS, PRESS 'HANDOUTS', 'COPY' FOR ADVERTISEMENTS are all available through Area Secretaries or H.A.C's., or direct from Headquarters.



TUBBY, a recent portrait by Walter Stoneman, F.R.P.S.



HONG KONG BALCONY

THIS QUOTATION from a letter written to Harry Gell by a young R.A.F. friend comes at a time when the future of the house in Hong Kong looks very uncertain for it seems likely that Toc H may not be allowed to retain it much longer. The extract reveals again the particular attraction which Talbot House has offered to young Servicemen who care to climb the hill in search of something 'just like home'. And the small team of members who have shouldered the responsibility for several years would be the first to ascribe its friendly atmosphere to the personality and devotion of Mrs. 'Kathie' Grimmo, the Matron.

I am sitting on the upstairs balcony of Talbot House, Hong Kong, and very nice it is too. It is the Toc H Leave Centre on the island and I am staying here for ten days. The food is wonderful, the beds and everything are extremely comfortable and the hosts really make a success of running it 'just like home'. Mind you, in my home at least, we don't have servants and laundresses and all that, but it certainly is a relaxing atmosphere and a complete change, not only from camp life but also from the majority of Service Leave Centres which are generally merely glorified barracks . . . Last Tuesday was the Branch meeting and when the business was over we had a 'Hat Night'. The longest two minutes of my life were spent talking about angling, something of which I am completely ignorant. About a month ago a member (Geoffrey Coxhead) gave a talk on Toc H work over Radio Hong Kong and they played the recording at the meeting. It was most illuminating. Later on I am going to ask permission to visit the Streetsleepers' Shelter, the Boys' Club, the Children's Home, all of which Toc H is either responsible for or has a finger in.

CAPE TOWN LANDING

Ossie Joseph, the 'whole-timer' stationed in Cape Town, has a most hospitable grouse that most people who are bound for Rhodesia get off the mail boat at Cape Town and catch the first train going North, whereas they might often be able to spend a couple of days in the Cape before leaving for Bulawayo. This is what he says about it:

It is true that the Rhodesian train runs only three days a week but immigrants could leave on Saturday afternoon and that would

give them time to take a reasonable look round (the mail boat docks on Thursdays). We could always find private hospitality for a single lad; in the case of a family we would possibly have to book them in at an hotel and would need notice. We would also attend to the train booking, provided again that we had sufficient notice.

BOTHA'S HILL

The following extract from the *Natal Daily News* should have appeared months ago in FAR CRY. Although as news it is now out of date it remains no less heart warming for that:

Natives employed by an international road building firm working in the district became aware of the settlement and the nature of its activities before Christmas. They subscribed small sums from their pay each week-end, and at Christmas, they asked the European foreman to buy parcels for each child patient at Botha's Hill and the money that had been collected allowed that to be done on a generous scale. Then they supplemented their good work and in a remarkably practical manner. With the assistance of their firm who lent them a lorry, fifteen of them devoted a Saturday to working, without pay, on the foundations of a new building. They refused even tea or coffee at the interval, saying that they had come to work, not to eat and drink.

Here, surely, is an example to the community. More and more in this age it is the tendency to wait and let outside agencies provide facilities, amenities and fill needs for us, both White and Black. Other people, the State or the Municipality must provide the settlements, the schools, the houses and the hospitals. Botha's Hill has shown us a new picture of effort and it is a healthy and refreshing one.

TALBOT HOUSE, MALTA

The news about Malta is saddening, for Talbot House in Tigne Street has now closed its doors and reverted to its landlord. The house has been a source of great anxiety for several years. Its use by the Royal Navy appeared to decline steadily until the Services Team was ultimately forced to ask itself whether or not its value to men was worth the heavy drain on the Services Fund. It is always a difficult matter to assess the financial worth of a human influence. But when the cost is met by a capital sum which gets smaller each year the assessment cannot be postponed indefinitely. Now the decision to close has been made and 'Wingco' (Wing Commander George Prigmore) has had the unenviable task of settling our affairs. This ends a chapter which began several years ago when a handful of experienced naval members, disregarding all difficulties, first set up house on this tightly-packed little island. What we shall continue to ask is 'when and where will the next chapter begin'?

G.M.

Destination

A
monthly link



Poperinghe

with
The Old House

MINE HOST OF BRUGES

One day recently who should drop in at Francis Street for morning coffee but M. Vanhove-Liebaert, ('Charles' to an increasing number of members), the Proprietor of the Pension Lybeer in Bruges. He asked after a number of friends, many of them from Peterborough and Bridlington.

THANK YOU

We want to acknowledge with very real appreciation an anonymous gift of £25 from a new member of a provincial Branch who paid his first visit to the Old House last summer.

MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD!

To his delighted surprise one of last season's Honorary Wardens has just received a fee of £1 11s. 6d. from the Editor of his local paper for an article on Talbot House, the first money ever earned with his pen. Instead of framing the cheque he has sent it to the Old House Fund—which surely deserves mention in despatches—which is why it is, if you know what I mean.

BEWARE! . . PLANNERS AT WORK

The Old House Committee has some bright ideas about next summer which it is itching to try out as an experiment. With luck (and application) they will be sufficiently coherent to announce in the January JOURNAL.

FROM THE WHISPERING GALLERY

We have heard indirectly that a number of Branches are saving up for a holiday in Belgium next year, with the Old House as a base. Don't forget that if you can raise a party of fifteen you will get one free 'leader's' ticket and very much reduced fares.



'PASS FRIEND'

A happy picture taken at the initiation of Michael Wasley aged 16½ years, the youngest member of Bognor Regis Branch. The two sponsors were his Scoutmaster and the Foreman of the printing works where Michael is serving an apprenticeship.

Borstal and After-care Conference

On Saturday, January 30, 1954, there will be a Conference at 42 Trinity Square, London, E.C.3, for Toc H members engaged in or interested to learn more about voluntary work either in Borstal Institutions or in connection with Borstal After-Care.

Mr. R. L. Bradley, M.C., one of H.M. Prison Commissioners and Director of Borstal Administration, and Frank Foster, Director of Borstal and Young Prisoners After-Care under the Home Office, will be the chief speakers. The chair will be taken by G. J. Morley Jacob, General Secretary of the London Police Court Mission and an ex-chairman of the Central Executive of Toc H.

The Conference will last from 6.0 p.m. till 9.0 p.m. approximately. High Tea will be available at 42 Trinity Square at 5.0 p.m. (Price 2s. 6d.). A limited amount of hospitality for the night can be provided by London Toc H members for members coming from far afield and unable to make their own arrangements.

Admission will be by ticket (free). Those wishing to take part are asked to write as early as possible to Alec Churcher at Toc H Headquarters, stating whether High Tea is required.

BRANCH BRIEFS

◆ Pouishnoff, the celebrated pianist, recently spoke to MILL HILL on rhythm: accepting it as the governing power of life's existence.

◆ An exhibition of pictures of Old Handsworth, staged by SANDWELL, helped defray the cost of an outing for fifty members of their Blind Club.

◆ Harold Fleming, former England international, appealed for SWINDON's 'live' match commentaries to local hospitals and raised £129 4s.

◆ Free holidays on the coast, arranged by HARROW for needy children since 1949 have now passed the sixty mark.

◆ Thirty Swedish students visited BROADSTAIRS this summer and it is anticipated that about four times as many will do so next year.

◆ To provide TV sets for patients in Whitchurch Hospital, WHITCHURCH and GABALFA have planned a fitch trial and a jumble sale.

◆ Members of HALIFAX accompanied a diviner one evening in a search for coal. Using whalebone rods, manifestations were obtained in the Blackburn Valley.

◆ A house-to-house collection for the Cornwall Fund for the Blind undertaken by PORTHLEVEN raised £31.

◆ Logs, cut from trees felled by members, will again be distributed this year by FARNHAM to needy folk.

◆ Tools for a carpentry section of their new Boys' Club are being sought by WOOLSTON. The address to send them: D. Etherington, 2 Osterley Road, Pear Tree, Southampton.

◆ A public meeting organised by GLOUCESTER led to the formation of a local committee for the British Empire Cancer Campaign.

◆ A handful of keen gardener-members of ILCHESTER for the third year running organised a successful Carnival, Flower Show and Fête in aid of the Family Purse.

◆ Windfalls from fruit trees have been collected by LOUGHTON this autumn for distribution among old people.

◆ DEBDEN (Essex) in addition to providing eight people with wireless sets have started a Club for blind folk.

Sergeant RON COOK, a member on service with the R.A.F. in Iraq, has sent us this welcome contribution for the Christmas number of the JOURNAL.

A Christmas Story

PETER lay on his bed in his cold, dingy attic room. Outside, the weather was cold and cheerless and the street buildings looked more grim and forbidding than ever. Though it was still early, the broken voice of some drunken tenant rose up from the dark well of the stairs. 'Christmas! So this is Christmas', he thought bitterly. 'Peace and good will to all men. What utter rot!'

Peter had been out of prison only a few days after serving a long sentence for embezzlement. Before being released he wrote to his wife, expecting her to meet him when he came out. There had been no reply to his letter and when the gate was opened to him, no sign of her. He remembered how he had shaken off his disappointment with the thought that perhaps his child was sick and she could not leave him. 'He must be quite a big lad now', he thought. From the prison he had gone to his house but, on knocking at the door, a stranger had opened it and there had been an embarrassed silence. "No. They did not know where she had gone". And so he had wandered around trying to find a place to stay while he searched for his wife and child. All the places he tried seemed to be full up until he had found this cold, dingy room.

'Christmas, the time of good will', he thought again, full of bitterness. He realised that he had done wrong that time so many years ago, but he had paid for it by years in prison. Now his wife, who had said she would wait for him no matter how long it was, had deserted him, where was the 'peace and good will' they were so fond of talking about?

Far below on the wet pavement he heard the treble voices of children singing, and the words of *Good Christian Men Rejoice*, floated up to him. 'Rejoice', he thought cynically, 'what is there to rejoice about?' and he turned over, trying to blot out the voices. But the voices would not be stilled; now they were singing the soft strains of *Silent Night, Holy Night*. Unbidden there came to him a scene from his home, when his son was just three. There was the Christmas tree and the warm firelight and the company was singing just that same carol.

"Oh God", he groaned, and nearly broke down. All that he had thrown away, he thought, and now there was no room for him in his home or anywhere else. No room, and the words came to him, "and they laid Him in a manger because there was no room at the Inn."

There had been no room for Him then but God, with His overflowing love had watched over His Son. And in later years there had still not been much room for Him—he had not given Him much room himself, now he came to think of it. They had mocked Him, thrown Him into prison, and finally crucified Him, and yet He had asked for forgiveness for them! There had been a disciple who had denied Him, hadn't there? What was his name? Oh yes, Peter. Funny his name should be Peter too. But the first Peter had cried out to God for forgiveness. Looking back over the past few years, he hadn't asked for forgiveness either from man or God!

There were those children again. Funny how those voices sounded so clear, almost as if they were in the room with him. *Christ the Saviour is born.* In his mind's eye he saw the lowly stable and the wise men, and the Child in the manger. "Oh God", he cried aloud, "what a fool I've been. Forgive me, teach me to know Thee, to be as humble as the poor shepherds that gathered at Thy Birth."

With the Angels let us sing, Alleluia to our King, Christ the Saviour is born! The voices seemed to ring with triumph, like the voices of angels rather than some ragged children in a dirty city street. He heard footsteps on the uncarpeted stairs. 'Just someone going to bed' he thought, without really taking much notice, his mind being far away. For the first time that he could remember he felt at peace. 'Funny', he thought, his bitterness gone, 'that the voices of those children should affect me so strangely; to make me think of the true meaning of Christmas after all this time!'

The footsteps drew nearer but he did not notice them. 'If only I could find my wife and son, this Christmas would be a real Christmas after all.' The door to his room opened and a voice said happily, but with compassion, "Peter, Peter darling, it has been so long, I thought I would never find you". He turned in surprise and there was his wife and, alongside her his son. Tears of happiness ran down their faces as they embraced. "I wrote to the prison that I had got a house, in a new district away from the people that know us, but

apparently the letter never reached you. When you didn't arrive we went to look for you and it has taken us until now to find you, but now, on Christmas Eve we're together again. What a glorious Christmas present!"

"Yes, I've had mine too", he said, but he did not explain what he meant.

R.A.C.

Farnham Castle Weeks, 1954

FOR THE FOURTH YEAR in succession Toc H will be in occupation of Farnham Castle during the month of August. If you would like to spend a holiday in an historic, very lovely, and very comfortable Castle, and to meet Toc H men and women from Overseas and from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland—please go on reading.

If you come on your own, you will find plenty of friends; if you want to come as a family, come as a family, though we have to limit the number of children in residence in any one week; if you want a friend who is not a member of Toc H to come with you, please bring him or her along.

The dates are as follows:

First Week: Sunday, August 1, to Saturday, August 7.

Second Week: Saturday, August 7, to Saturday, August 14.

Third Week: Saturday, August 14, to Saturday, August 21.

Fourth Week: Saturday, August 21, to Saturday, August 28.

The cost for the first week will be £3 17s. 0d. per head: for each of the other weeks £4 10s. 0d. per head. Children up to the age of sixteen years are charged half-price. The cost includes Breakfast, Lunch, Tea and Dinner.

If it becomes possible for us to take over the Castle in time to receive Guests on Saturday, July 31, we shall most certainly do so. We will let those who have booked for this week know about this as soon as possible. If the change is made, then those who arrive on the Saturday will be asked to pay the full week's charge of £4 10s. 0d.

Please send your provisional booking as soon as possible to: The Hon. Warden, Farnham Castle Weeks, Toc H, 47 Francis Street, London, S.W.1.



Where the cost of books reviewed in these pages is more than some members can afford, readers may like to be reminded that they can often be obtained through their local Public Library.

MOBILE MEN

Touching the Adventures and Perils . . . they are of the Seas, Men-of-War, Enemies, Pirates, Rovers, Thieves, Jettisons, Letters of Mart, and Countermart, Surprisals, Takings at Sea, Arrests, Restraints and Detainments of all Kings, Princes and People . . . and of all other Perils. Extract from Lloyd's Marine Insurance Policy.

For all that we are an island people, dependent on the free traffic of the Merchant Navy for our very existence, few landsmen have any close knowledge of the Merchant Seaman's pride of craft. Neither by man nor by weather can he be prevented from carrying his cargoes and passengers, for that is his essential service. In time of war an even thicker mist blots out his comings and goings from our shores and we are only able to guess, from reading 'between the lines', of new dangers met with and greater hazards overcome.

Now that such secrecy imposed by war-time conditions is no longer necessary twenty members of the Merchant Navy have in this book set down some of the things they saw or endured during World War II. Their stories are told in widely varying styles, but all of them bear the hall-mark of the authentic seafarer. In a foreword, John Masefield writes:

In this book you will find more of the real history of the war than will be put into the history-books. War found us, as always, unready, with a vast fleet of unarmed merchantmen at sea, no weapons to put into them, not enough destroyers to guard them . . . As before, the defence had to be improvised and built up, at great cost and in imminent peril; and until that was done these papers show what happened. Brave men were recalled from quiet to face the deadliest perils ever known at sea; the landsman, the land-boy, and the brave young woman volunteered in their thousands to help in the venture . . . Among these heroical memoirs, perhaps the very best, is that called "Ordeal", in which a quiet English girl, one of a boat's crew, behaves with a simple splendour hard to read of.

During the war, many thousands of seafarers set out on their last voyages, and of those who did return to port many were rendered unfit for further service. It was a happy idea

to ensure that they should be kept in mind by gifting the fees and royalties of this book to King George's Fund for Sailors. All who buy a copy will have the added satisfaction of knowing that they, too, are contributing to this most worthy project.

CALLED UP

A Guide for the National Serviceman in the Army. By Major T. B. Beveridge, O.B.E. (Phoenix, 5s. 0d.)

*The men that fought at Minden, they were rookies in their time
So was them that fought at Waterloo!*

Accelerated by two World Wars, Army life and training has changed a lot since Kipling's time. Nowadays, with two years' National Service a 'must' for nearly all our young men there is precious little glamour about 'going for a soldier'. Instead, a far greater demand is made on their intelligence—yes, I know all about the high proportion of illiterates—and it's a very wise young man who knows all the pitfalls that face the new recruit.

In this little book, Major Beveridge has set out in a simple non-official way the answers to many of the questions that everyone asks about various aspects of National Service. He also explains the objects of training, the existing opportunities and a man's rights while serving in the Army. To the young man awaiting call-up it offers sound advice and many parents with sons approaching military age would be glad to read these pages.

PLAY POINTS

Know the Game: Association Football (Education Productions Ltd., 2s. 0d.)

With Association Football occupying the position it does in our national life I wonder how many spectators, not to mention the vast army of Pools computers, could supply the nine correct answers to each of these two questions:

- (a) *For what offence is a free kick awarded?*
- (b) *State offences for which the punishment is an indirect free kick.*

The answers to these and many more questions are clearly given, together with many charts, in this well printed booklet. It forms one of a series covering a wide field of outdoor games and is designed to encourage both players and spectators alike to take a closer interest in the technical details of the game.

Stamps for Christmas

IN THE DESK DRAWER at '47' is an envelope full of foreign stamps, awaiting collection by Charles Wake who will sell them on behalf of Toc H. They are, of course, more than stamps; they are reminders of people, friendly people who we know personally or with whom a friendship has grown through interchange of letters.

For instance on the top of the pile—because it has only just arrived—is a new Australian $3\frac{1}{2}$ d. printed 'Young Farmer's Club'. It is from the new Honorary Commissioner of Toc H New South Wales, to whom we wrote a matey line of welcome and introduction some time ago. To our "Dear Colonel Peters" he replies "Dear Mr. Martin" so you see that naturally and rightly we are starting at the beginning.

The next to spill out of the envelope are two Argentina 40 cents, side by side with a green one of indecipherable value. There can be little doubt about the origin of these, for the stamps and the piece of air-mail envelope announce the almost physical arrival (so well do we know him) of Pat Moxey, Honorary Commissioner for Argentina, who will have written about the Mark in Buenos Aires. Yet it might have been Sheila Vignoles, the Honorary Secretary, or even Norman Currie who is returning to England with his family.

Now this is a really decorative piece of envelope. The post mark is 'Takoradi', and there are two yellow Gold Coasts at 6d., one blue at 1d. and a mauve 2d. These are a vivid reminder of Len Nicholson who has recently swapped mining in Morro Velho, Brazil, for timber on the Gold Coast. His long and welcome letter sent a cold shiver of pleasure down our corporate spine, for having received our letter on October 8 he replied on October 9. Thus we are once more in debt to him!

Now we have stupidly upset the lot and as they are shuffled about, the office door metaphorically bursts open and a crowd of personalities come crashing in. Here are a 'blue Canadian' and a larger mauve 10 cents. The postmark is Toronto so that would almost certainly be George Andrew; next a clump

of Ugandas, 50 cents, 30 cents, 1s. and in comes Charles Potts of Kampala, who we already know well, or Dick Topley, or Holt-Kentwell whom we have yet to know well. Next a Gibraltar 3d., and who can this be but 'Jock' Brown having presumably deserted his Leave Camp at Little Bay to return to Scotland for a fresh kilt? The crowd scatter a little to make way for an enormous bit of envelope complete with seven large green Ethiopia 5 and 10 cents. Now we really are foxed, for who on earth is there in Ethiopia? Who indeed?—None other than our old friend, Alexander Zographos, to whom we wrote in Alexandria and who has replied from Addis Abbaba where he is now installed.

But it is lunch time, so we will collect the rest of our friends and do ourselves proud round the corner for 2s. 6d. Among us there will be a Southern Rhodesia 2d. (Frank Guest of Salisbury) some Malaya 5 and 25 cents (Ben Miles), a small, blue Brazil and a large greeny-brown one with a surrealist device upon it (that's Edgar Cabot of Rio), Indias galore, which would be R. D. Paul, a Northern Rhodesia 2d. and an Indonesia 7½., 30 and 2.50 sen, a New Zealand 8d., a Denmark 30 k. and a Jamaica 1d.

These, then, are some of our absent friends. If we leave our minds ajar on Christmas day as likely as not they will come trooping in to share with us in celebrating the Lord's Birthday.

G.M.

A GRIPPING PLAY

Following on their successful production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the TORCH PLAYERS have since tackled *The Vigil*, by Ladislav Fodor. For three successive nights in October, enthusiastic audiences in Wimbledon Town Hall were moved by this stirring play of a tale two thousand Easters old, told in a modern setting. The cast of twenty-one players, many of whom had undertaken humbler rôles in this year's Masque at the Toc H Festival, was adequately headed by Patrick Partridge, who was also responsible for the production.

Despite the lack of action (in this it rivals G.B.S.'s *Apple Cart*) and a certain monotony of scene—the play being set entirely in a Courthouse—it gripped from the start and maintained the high standard we expect from this outstanding amateur group.

C.



Open

HUSTINGS

The Editor welcomes letters on all matters concerning Toc H. For reasons of space the right is reserved to shorten letters received, but every effort is made to print a representative selection.

Bishop Pat's Thanks

A few Toc H friends of Pat Leonard made him a present on the eve of his consecration as Bishop of Thetford at Michaelmas. Pat writes:—

DEAR EDITOR,

Would it be possible for you to put a wee bit in JOURNAL expressing my deep gratitude to all of those who by their gifts have clothed me in purple and warmed my heart. With the cheque I have bought my episcopal cassock and also paid for the cost of my consecration in Southwark Cathedral—both quite expensive items. My love to you all.

PAT.

Capital Punishment

DEAR EDITOR,

Whatever the reason for publishing the above article in your November JOURNAL, it is pure propaganda against Capital Punishment, and I wish to register 100 per cent. disagreement with the line of reasoning.

Like all similar propaganda, it is deplorable that there is not one word of sympathy with the victim or the victim's relatives. I am completely on the side of the victim, and the notion of making things unpleasant for the criminal anti-Christian is repugnant. It tends to treat the

infamous deed lightly, and encourages many a murderer to have another go, for Sir, it must be remembered that many a murderer has taken more than one life.

What Christ would say on any individual case of murder obviously no man can say, though they could speculate on the matter till the crack of doom. God is love, very true, but I have yet to learn that He would treat murder as leniently as some of your members appear to do.

R. C. GRAHAM.

Forest Hill, S.E.23

Bulb Sales

DEAR EDITOR,

The annual advertisement of tulips from Pinchbeck Branch attracted my attention in the September JOURNAL and they are to be congratulated on raising £70 for the Family Purse by this means. While I imagine that they get a fair bit of support from Toc H members all over the country it might be of interest to hear that Harrow Branch have also made a little more from the same source. In 1951 a small number of orders were collected and forwarded; in 1952 orders for 600 bulbs were collected and in 1953 orders for over 700 bulbs have been satisfied. The profit to Branch funds

(50-50 Family Purse and Holidays for Children Fund) in the last two years has been 50/- each year and is done simply by ordering in bulk and undertaking the distribution.

I shall await with interest the amount that Pinchbeck Branch will raise this year and do congratulate them on their enterprise.

TED CURRY.

Pinner, Middx.

Thanks to Kurri-Kurri

DEAR EDITOR,

While visiting Australia recently I found the nearest Branch from where I was staying was Kurri-Kurri. A letter to the Secretary brought a warm invitation to visit them, at their headquarters at the

back of the local Chemist's shop.

They are a fine type of young men and all very keen to do their jobs, which include taking a cinema projector to hospitals, homes and orphanages. From what I heard from outsiders the work is greatly appreciated. During the Coronation Festivities this Branch assisted the local tradesmen in entertaining the population and full marks were accorded them for the work they did. They also had a tableau advertising Toc H. The good fellowship I experienced will always be a happy memory and I'd like to wish Kurri-Kurri Branch good luck and a continuance of their good work.

LEWIS DUNN.

Bedlington, Northumberland.

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